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EPISCOPAL CHURCH IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA, IN
GENERAL CONVENTION, AT THE CONSECRATION OF

THE REV. ALFRED LEE, D. D.,

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"Take heed unto thyself and the doctrine; continue in them; for in so doing thou shalt both save thyself and them that hear thee."—I TIMOTHY iv. 16.

BOTH save thyself and them that hear thee!—such is the work committed, of God, to the minister of his word. One would think it were enough for a sinful man, with such corruption within, and such a world around him, to take heed to the saving of his own soul. But when to this is added the saving of them that hear him, well may the bearer of such an office be filled with fear and trembling, for "who is sufficient for these things?" What it is for a soul to be lost, to go down to hell under the anger of Almighty God, and from under all the privileges of the gospel, having to answer, amidst innumerable other sins, for that one most awful sin of receiving the grace of God in vain, of rejecting the precious blood of Christ—we cannot approach the conception of such a destiny—a lost immortal soul—eternity without God, without hope—everlasting wo!

But we turn away to think of the salvation of the soul, through Christ for ever; what it is for a sinner to be confessed of Christ in the great day, as one of his ransomed and beloved brethren; to be received of the Father to his own right hand as one of his adopted, beloved children; then to enter upon the incorruptible inheritance as "joint heir with Christ," like Christ in his glory, with Christ in his

kingdom, seeing him as he is, changed more and more, ever and ever, into the same image; oh, such salvation! What an alarming consideration for us, ministers of the gospel, that whether the sinners that hear us shall attain that blessedness, or go down to that wo, is to so great an extent committed to us, by our faithfulness, or unfaithfulness, to decide!

Two questions arise out of these meditations, and stand before a minister of the gospel in an aspect of magnitude and solemnity, before which all other questions must needs stand aside and keep silence—*what must I do to save my own soul under such responsibility? what must I do to save them that hear me?*

To put in diligent practice the right answer to these questions, is the one great business of him whose high dignity it is to have been put in trust with the gospel, as a preacher of the same. How ought we to "covet earnestly the best gifts" for such a work, and how anxious should we be to mark, learn, and inwardly digest whatever will give us more knowledge, more spiritual discernment, more practical wisdom, more seriousness, singleness and constancy of purpose, more diligence of mind and heart and life, in regard to the infinite interests which this stewardship involves! It is that, under the good blessing of the Lord, I may contribute something to the furtherance of my brethren in the ministry, and especially of that brother who is now to be invested with the chief stewardship of our ministry, in discharging the duties of so high a dignity and so weighty an office, that I have selected the words of the text. They are part of the charge of St. Paul to Timothy, bishop of the church of Ephesus, as to how he should behave himself in the house of God, as a "messenger, watchman, and steward of the Lord." Two distinct *injunctions* are contained in them—*take heed unto thyself—take heed unto the doctrine.* On the faithful keeping of these injunctions ensues an assurance—*thou shalt both save thyself and them that hear thee.*

The most natural order of discourse is often the reversed order of nature. We take up the second of the above injunctions.

I. *Take heed unto the doctrine.*

And here let me begin with directing your attention to the evidence that the *hearing* of the word, by the *preaching* of the same, is that special means of grace by which, under the ordinance of God, the minister of Christ is to seek the salvation of men. By taking heed to our doctrine, as well as to ourselves, it is promised, we shall be instrumental in saving them that *hear* us; whence it follows that doctrine *heard*, and therefore doctrine *preached*, and consequently the preaching of the gospel, as distinct, though not separated, from all other means, is the one great ordinance for the bringing of sinners to repentance, and for the building up of penitent believers in their most holy faith; according as it is written, *faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God; and how shall they hear without a preacher?*

As to the relative importance of the preaching of the gospel, and

the public worship of the house of God, taking into view the whole object, interest and structure of the church, it is impossible to make any comparison. You might as well compare the head and heart of man, in reference to his life. The one is the great means for one set of objects, the other equally essential for another.

The ministry of the word and the ministry of worship are parts of the same body, equally vital, but of different use. To represent the duty of preaching and hearing God's message in his gospel, as if it were of subordinate importance, as regards the highest interests of the church and of souls, is as erroneous, as to assign the like place to the duty of maintaining, and attending upon, God's worship in the sanctuary. Carefully should both extremes be avoided. We are all, as christians, "*a holy priesthood to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God through Jesus Christ;*" but the distinguishing and leading charge of the Head of that one and only catholic priesthood, to the ministers of the same, is "*go, preach the gospel;*" go give light, that there may be love; go, make disciples, that there may be worshipers; go and gather the living stones for the temple, and build them up together, by the line and plummet of the word, upon the one corner stone, "elect and precious," and erect therein an altar composed of hearts renewed and sanctified "*through the truth;*" then will follow the sacrifices of thanksgiving and praise unto God for the unsearchable riches of his grace as made known in his gospel. If the church, in reference to her communion with God, is called his temple, because therein is the daily oblation of his people's praise and prayer; so also in reference to her influence in enlightening the world, through the preaching of the truth, is she represented as the *golden candlestick*, and her ministers as shining stars, held in the right hand and made luminous by the light from the face of the Lord, her sun and glory.

In the holy place of the tabernacle, which was a type of the church in its earthly state, there was the golden candlestick with its seven burning lamps, as well as the altar of incense with its golden censer. These stood equidistant from the entrance to within the veil. While the way into the holiest would have been unhallowed without the one, it could not have been seen without the other. Incense was burned on that altar, morning and evening of every day; but let it be marked, it was always at the time when the priest, evening and morning, trimmed and replenished those ever shining lights. Thus intimately was the symbol of a worshipping church connected with that of a preaching ministry; and thus we are taught by these divinely appointed types to understand that the worship of the sanctuary will be maintained in spirit and in truth, only so long as the gospel shall be preached in purity and faithfulness; and moreover, that the best evidence of faithful preaching is when it promotes the offering of the incense of fervent prayer. But hence comes with the greater impressiveness the injunction, "*take heed unto the doctrine.*"

In speaking further on this portion of our text, we will confine our

attention to two points of care, on the part of a minister; viz. that *his every doctrine be according to the only divine rule of faith*, and that all his doctrines be exhibited, in their several relations, "*according to the proportion of faith.*"

Take heed unto the doctrine that it be ACCORDING TO THE ONLY DIVINE RULE OF FAITH, THE HOLY SCRIPTURES. "*If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God*"—any man, any where; but how much more should we who speak as "ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech men by us." "*Preach the word,*" is the inspired charge, through Timothy, to all generations of preachers. He who magnifies his office as God's messenger, and knows the worth of his own soul, and seeks earnestly the souls of his hearers, and would preach "as one having authority, and not as the scribes," not as the schools—not as man's wisdom teacheth, will not venture one step beyond what he is "persuaded may be concluded and proved by the scripture;" knowing that he "cannot by any other means compass the doing of so great a work; but with doctrine and exhortation taken out of the holy scriptures." The seed he is now to sow in his field has been given to him of the "Father who is the husbandman." To that only is it true that "God giveth the increase." By that only are we ordained to go and bring forth fruit, fruit *that will remain*. To sow any other, and expect from it righteousness, is no wiser than to look for "grapes of thorns or figs of thistles." Even an unrighteous prophet was so afraid of not speaking the oracles of God, that he said, "If Balak would give me his house full of silver and gold, I cannot go beyond the commandment of the Lord: what the Lord saith, that will I speak." *What the Lord saith*; that is our lively oracle. And since we have no evidence that the Lord hath so spoken to his church as to furnish her with any other oracles than those of his holy scriptures; and since of them we have the evidence of divers miracles and prophecies, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, that they are "*given by the inspiration of God, and profitable for doctrine;*" we are left to conclude that in them is the only final rule of faith to the church, the only *final authority* to which the minister is to go for the words of eternal life. And hence the introduction of the scriptures so conspicuously, so singly, into the offices of our church, for the ordination and consecration of those who are to feed her flocks; the candidate being required to declare himself "persuaded that the holy scriptures contain all doctrine required as necessary to salvation, and that he is determined, out of the scriptures, to instruct the people committed to his charge, and to teach nothing as necessary to eternal salvation but that which he shall be persuaded may be concluded and proved by the scripture."

Till recently it was not supposed possible that, under such solemn pledges, the single authority of the scriptures, as alone the oracles of God, could be drawn into question. But strange and mortifying it is to say, that the Protestant church is at this day molested with attempts, within, to introduce for *co-ordinate authority*, that which we had

hoped had long since been finally rejected and protested against, with all other like devices of the Man of Sin for overthrowing the reign of Christ.

Into a consideration of what is now taught on the subject of tradition as the "*authoritative interpreter*" of the scriptures, as constituting with them "*a joint rule of faith*," as proceeding originally from the same fount of inspiration, and so meriting, in this the eighteenth century of its course, an equally reverential regard, we have no intention of entering. The existence of such an apparition in the present age of our Protestant church, has been alluded to for the sake of the strong contrast by which it enables us to show the doctrine of our ordination vows, as above cited, concerning the scriptures as alone the oracles of God; and also that I may urge upon my brethren in the ministry, that whatever evil may come to others from the gathering up of the traditions by the draught of a drag net which embraces the rubbish of even *seven* centuries, for an infallible interpretation of the scriptures; *they*, for themselves, will take heed that the affliction may be so sanctified to them, that by showing them how easily the wisdom of man may be deceived, by a false "*angel of light*," and how prone it is, under an idea of doing God service, to pervert his plain truth by complex inventions of men, they may be led by the present evil only to search more diligently, follow more simply, and preach more exclusively and fondly the plain text of the bible. Be assured we escape no controversies, but multiply all, by associating with the bible, for *final authority*, the judgments of men, however numerous, learned, holy, or ancient. It is not because the scriptures are not plain enough that divisions in doctrine abound; but because the hearts of men are not honest enough. The same cause would darken any counsel and pervert any rule, and the easier in proportion as the rule was strict and the counsel holy. It is no more to be supposed that God, in providing a revelation for man, would have furnished such means of understanding it, that none could help knowing the doctrine, than that he should have so displayed its evidences, that none could help believing its truth. It is as really our probation whether we will so read the scriptures as to understand their doctrine, as whether we will so read the same as to obey their precept. To seek a rule, in tradition, or in any thing else, by which to prevent the possibility of errors, and divisions, and heresies, concerning the faith, no matter what the jaundice of the eye, or enmity of the heart, is to seek what would be wholly inconsistent with that probation under which we are held, as well for the unbiased use of our understanding, as for the obedient submission of our will. If, notwithstanding all his mighty works, our Lord, in the days of his ministry on earth, did not so reveal himself as that none who saw his miracles could help believing his word, we may be sure, now that miracles have ceased, that he has not so committed the treasure of his truth to earthen vessels, as that none who read can avoid an erroneous or heretical interpretation. The existence of divers opinions as to what is truth,

is no more the evidence that the written word, as a rule of faith, is defective, than the multiplied forms of ungodliness in a christian land are proof of defect in the motives for holy obedience to the moral law. The remedy against error is not in mending the rule by which we measure our doctrines, but in taking the beam out of the eye that judges of their truth; not by making the scripture "profitable for doctrine" by dividing its authority with the traditions of many centuries, but by humbling the reader into a more implicit submission to, and a more entire contentment with, whatever it teaches. "The wayfaring man" who cannot choose his course by taking observations of the sun as it shines in the broad daylight of the scriptures, will little help his accuracy by resorting to the dead reckoning of tradition.

Then let the bible be our only final appeal—the bible in all its parts—the bible in its unutterable mysteries—the bible in its every subordinate statement—the bible meekly received, as "the engrafted word which is able to save our souls," and those that hear us, "through faith in Christ Jesus." But this leads us to the second particular under the injunction of taking heed unto doctrine.

Take heed unto the doctrine, not only that every part be according to the rule, but all parts, in their several relations, so held and exhibited as to be ACCORDING TO THE PROPORTION OF FAITH.

There is a proportion of faith, because there is a body of faith—a system of faith, with a beauty of symmetry in the whole, as well as the parts; a harmony of relation, without a discernment of which the full value of no one member can be understood. In one sense, it is right to say that all parts of revealed truth are essential. Essential to the complete *integrity* of the system they certainly are. In another sense, it is right to say that all parts are not essential. Essential to the *vitality* of religion they certainly are not. There are truths, without the confession of which the soul can live unto God, though it may suffer loss; and there are others, without which it cannot; just as there are members of our bodies without which we can survive, and others without which life must be extinct;—all essential to integrity—not all to vitality. The pattern of the tabernacle which was shown to Moses in the mount had its various parts, from the net work of the outer court, to the most fine gold of the inner sanctuary; and every cord of that net work was as essential to the perfect integrity of the pattern, as any crowning of gold about the mercy seat. But who can say that the ark of the covenant and the mercy seat within the veil were not more vitally important than the whole frame work around them? So, in the doctrine of the gospel, there is a *proportion of importance*; some parts more prominent, more necessary, while none can say to any, "I have no need of thee;" all "compact-ed together by that which every joint supplieth," all nourished by the same central fountain, animated by one pulse, depending on one head, even Jesus Christ, "from whom all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered and knit together, increaseth with the in-

crease of God." To preach the truth, in this, its right shape and proportion, is a great duty. All we say may be scriptural; we may keep back no single feature of the whole body of revealed truth; and yet our representations may be so confused, disjointed, unshapen; the greater points so hid in the undue prominence of the less, means so confounded with ends, the stream of life with its channels, the symptoms of health with its properties, outward motion with inward life, the mode of professing with the mode of obtaining grace; no separate statement untrue, but each in its relative bearing so confused, as to leave an impression scarcely better than that of positive error.

Three main objects we must ever seek, if we would save them that hear us, viz. to convince men of their depraved, guilty, lost condition; to show, and lead them to embrace, the sure refuge in Christ, as well that their condemnation may be removed, as their sinfulness purged; and then, when they are "in Christ Jesus," to promote their continual growth in grace, "unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." We are to estimate the relative prominence of each doctrine by its connection, more or less intimate, with these great objects. The position of various doctrines in our ministry must be adjusted by our having these objects always foremost. But when it is considered, that in almost every congregation are all grades of hearers, from those who have yet to see their ruined estate, to him who is inquiring the way to the remedy, and then to those who have found Christ, and are "found in him;" that to each class is to be spoken the word in season, and this not once, or twice, but continually, so that every case may be met, every weapon of our warfare used, every snare of the devil encountered, every difficulty of the weak removed, every false hope of the presumptuous exposed; when it is considered how the great variety of circumstances under which we preach, must needs control the manner and proportion in which we are to bring out the several parts of the "whole counsel of God," it must be manifest that what St. Paul calls "*rightly dividing the word of truth*," can be no work for an indolent, heedless, formal laborer. A skill is needed which none can possess, whose own personal experience of the power and preciousness of divine truth, in its application to the various wants of the sinner, is not deep and abiding. The guidance of books can take us but a short way in this duty. Wisdom from above is the only sufficient counsel. Prayer and devout study of the scriptures, with reference continually to the state of our own hearts, are the great means of growing in such wisdom. The way to speak skilfully from God is often to hear him speak. "The Lord hath given me the tongue of the learned (saith the prophet, giving the language of the Messiah) that I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary." Yes, brethren, the tongue of such learning, infinitely more precious than any other learning for a minister of the gospel, must be given of the Lord, or we have it not. No wisdom of man can furnish it. It is a learning in which we may advance without end. And the more we realize of the greatness and difficulty of our

work, and the better we are fitted in point of spirit for its duties, the more humbly shall we feel our need of that learning, and the more constantly be found at the feet of Jesus, that we may learn of him.

It must be obvious, brethren, that the limits of this discourse do not allow me to take any more than a glance at the wide range of important topics, to which the injunction of the text, "*take heed unto the doctrine,*" directly leads.

Had I more time, I would speak earnestly upon the prominence to be given in our ministry at all times to that great topic which St. Paul considered of such overmastering claims that he desired to preach and live, as if knowing nothing else, among men—"Jesus Christ, and him crucified." The person, and offices of Christ; what he has done to save sinners; what he is now doing at the right hand of God for all that come unto God by him; the universal embrace of his atonement; the full, free, and complete salvation provided, in his death and intercession, for the chief of sinners; the boundless love which that death displays; the precious invitations and promises which proceed therefrom; the nature of that godly sorrow—that spiritual regeneration, that true conversion, by which alone the sinner can be turned unto the Lord; the nature and agency of that living faith, by which alone the penitent heart embraces the atonement, puts on the righteousness of Christ, is justified freely and perfectly through the imputation of that righteousness, as soon as he believes with the heart, and thus is "accepted in the beloved," as completely as if he had never sinned; the prominence, the constancy, the devotedness, the earnestness with which a minister of Christ should preach these chief doctrines, with the several truths directly and necessarily connected therewith; then the great importance of scriptural simplicity in the mode of presenting them, so that their aim may not be hindered by confusion of purpose, nor their point blunted by fear of offence, nor their force weakened by combination with "words of man's wisdom," but that the truth, "as it is in Jesus," may be delivered in the spirit of Jesus, according to "the mind of Christ," so that the blind may see and the feeblest mind may understand, and sleeping consciences may be aroused. Then the great importance of making all our preaching doctrinal, and yet all our doctrine practical; never severing the truth from the duty which results from it, nor ever preaching the duty without the doctrinal principle on which it depends; never representing gospel doctrine as if it could have any vital interest with us or real faith, only as it is embraced in the heart and carried out in the life; nor ever, any more, exhibiting gospel practice as if it were possible that it should exist, in any degree, only upon the single basis of distinctive gospel doctrine; all these are most important matters indeed, but at which we can do no more than thus briefly glance. I trust the very imperfect view which has now been given, may, under divine blessing, be the means of impressing more deeply upon my brethren in the ministry, "how studious they ought to be in reading and learning the scriptures; and for this selfsame cause, how they ought

to forsake and set aside, as much as they may, all worldly cares and studies—giving themselves wholly to this office whereunto it hath pleased God to call them, so that, as much as lieth in them, they may apply themselves wholly to this one thing, and draw all their cares and studies this way, and continually pray for the heavenly assistance of the Holy Ghost, that by daily reading and weighing the Scriptures they may wax riper and stronger in their ministry." Thus, with increasing wisdom, will they learn to preach the truth, the truth *only* and *entirely*, the truth as it all leads to Christ, testifies of Christ, derives its power and preciousness from Christ; and the truth *seasonably*, rightly divided and appropriated according to the various wants and conditions of the hearers. But we must proceed to the second injunction of the text.

II. *Take heed unto thyself.*

With great wisdom, indeed, does the apostle enjoin the minister to take heed to his doctrine, by first taking heed to himself; the clearness of our perceptions of truth depending so greatly on the purity of our affections towards it; the vigor and simplicity of our study of christian doctrine depending so essentially upon the submissiveness of our hearts to the will of God, and our abiding sense of the infinite value of his every word. "There is (says Bishop Taylor) in the things of God, to them which practise them, a deliciousness that makes us love them, and that love admits us into God's cabinet, and strangely clarifies the understanding by the purification of the heart. So long as we know God only in the ways of man, by contentious learning, by arguing and dispute, we see nothing but the shadow of him. But when we know him with the eye of holiness and the intuition of gracious experiences, with a quiet spirit and the peace of enjoyment; then we shall hear what we never heard, and see what our eyes never saw; then the mysteries of godliness shall be opened unto us, and clear as the windows of the morning—for though the scriptures themselves are written by the Spirit of God, yet they are written *within and without*; and besides the light that shines upon the face of them, unless there be a light shining within our hearts, unfolding the leaves and interpreting the mysterious sense of the Spirit, convincing our consciences and preaching to our hearts; to look for Christ in the leaves of the gospel, is to look for the living among the dead."

How much reason have we to suppose, as we read the history of the church, that it is to a heart inexperienced in divine things, insensible to its own corruptions, and its need of the sanctification of the Spirit, having never "tasted that the Lord is gracious," and therefore having never desired, "as a new born babe, the sincere milk of the word;" or if essentially given to God, living in a perpetual winter of spiritual life, with all its spiritual appetites and discernment in bondage to a spirit of self indulgence and worldliness, so that pride and ease, and the fear of man and the easily besetting sin, have had much to say on every question of doctrine and duty; how much reason to

suppose that to such an *unheeded self* are to be ascribed the most lamentable errors of doctrine which have plagued the church, as well as much of the confusedness and feebleness with which the truth has been often held and preached.

"*Keep thy heart with all diligence, (saith the wise man,) for out of it are the issues of life.*" Yea, minister of Christ, "*with all diligence,*" for on the state of thy heart depend all the issues of life in thy ministry. The minister, in his public work, is in a great degree what, as a christian, he is in his secret exercises of heart, with God. Out of his praying and watching comes his effectual preaching. As he takes heed to his own soul, will he see carefully, faithfully, to the souls of others.

But let us bring the injunction of the text within more definite bounds. Our first application of it then is—

I. "*Take heed to thyself,*" that thou be a *genuine disciple of Christ, truly converted unto God.* What an awful thing for a man to say that he trusts he is "*inwardly moved by the Holy Ghost*" to this office and ministration, if he have no reason to trust that he has ever so far received the Holy Ghost as to have repented of his sins and become, except in sacramental profession, a child of God. But that such cases do occur, it were not charity, but blindness, to question. Alas! to preach to others, and even be instrumental in bringing some of them to Christ for ever, and then ourselves be cast away! Did even St. Paul feel the need of the greatest care lest such should be his case? How much more should we take heed that it be not ours. "*Examine yourselves whether ye be in the faith!*" There are circumstances which render a minister peculiarly liable to put a favorable estimate on his state. That busy employment and familiar contact with spiritual things which, if we are alive towards God, promotes our growth in grace, will, if we are living in a merely formal state, but confirm our formality. That which one may be doing only as a minister, he may easily be persuaded is done only as a christian; mere professional consistency may easily appear as if it were pious obedience; a certain degree of interest in the ministry and love for the church, for her dignified order and venerable forms of worship, which may arise from no higher source than our being personally identified therewith, or their being associated with a long retrospect of centuries and the history of a noble army of martyrs; this, joined to a reverential familiarity with the scriptures, a blameless life before men, a ready sympathy in the cause of humanity, a zeal for what we think true doctrine, and to bring others to its adoption, and then its being taken for granted by those around us that we are truly christian men because christian ministers—all this may easily persuade us that all is well within, while, in the sight of God, there may be no spiritual life in us. Oh, let us fear lest, while distributing bread to the poor, we perish with want; lest while inviting sinners to put on the righteousness of Christ, by faith, we should not touch so much as the hem of his garment. To worship an unknown God, preach an

unknown Savior, and yet be answerable for the whole work of an ambassador of Christ, what a fearful state! Our Lord has warned us that in the great day there will be many who will be found in this condemnation—men who, when the door is shut and they shall be standing without, dreadfully dismayed, will plead their ministry:—“Have we not prophesied in thy name, and in thy name cast out devils, and in thy name done many wonderful works?” but to whom will issue the irrevocable sentence—“*Depart, all ye workers of iniquity.*” Their fall will be from “the pinnacle of the temple;” their plunge the deeper into everlasting fire. God grant unto us, not only that we may always preach the whole gospel, but in doing so, may speak what we do personally know, and testify what we have seen, and felt, and followed.

But the minister of Christ must take heed unto himself that he be not only a man of true piety, but of *eminent piety: not only in grace, but growing in grace—a lively and flourishing christian.* I would, therefore, urge the unspeakable importance that men of God, standing in the holy place of his temple, and charged with all his messages to mankind, should aim at exalted attainments in grace. And in doing this, I would confine my remarks to the necessity of high attainments in piety, *for the faithful, persevering, successful prosecution of the various duties of the ministry.*

The tide of our faithfulness, in the main channel, and in all the minor branches and inlets of duty, will ebb and flow precisely as the well of living water which is in us, from Christ, shall spring up, feebly, or vigorously, unto everlasting life. Is the heart of our piety beating strongly for God? Every sermon, every pastoral duty will feel its bounding pulse. Baxter said, “I publish to my flock the distempers of my own soul. When I let my heart grow cold, my preaching is cold; and when it is confused, my preaching is confused. We are the nurses of Christ’s little ones. If we forbear taking food ourselves, we shall famish them. If we let our love decline, we are not likely to raise theirs.”* It requires but little reflection to perceive not only that all the parts of divine truth must be greatly affected in our conceptions, and representations, and applications of them, by the state of religion in our hearts, but that a very large and most interesting portion of the subject matter of our preaching must be presented so formally and artificially, except our religious affections be in a tender, earnest, growing state, that for the most part it will be left out, and other matter more easily treated by a cold heart, will be substituted. To exhibit the commandments and penalties of the law, with the great outlines of the way of salvation, by the gospel; to depict, in general terms, the wisdom, excellence, and benefit of a religious life; to warn the impenitent by the terrors of the Lord: to vindicate christian doctrine, exhort to diligence in all duty, speak of the shortness and uncertainty of human life, and describe the awfulness of an

* Reformed Pastor.

unforgiven sinner ; to do all this, and much more of the same kind, with force, feeling, plainness, usefulness, is comparatively easy where there is a real piety, though it be not a piety of much life. But when we come to the more secret ways and dealings of the Lord with his people: when the object is to lead the christian believer within the inner veil, and show him that interior sanctuary of the grace of God into which the natural man cannot look ; when the promises of God, in all their fulness of love and consolation, and the privileges of the sons of God in all their glory, are to be displayed ; when, not in the thunder, nor the earthquake, nor the blast of trumpet, the christian is to be made to hear the words of his covenant God, but in "*the still, small voice*," of divine compassion and tenderness ; when the duty is to encourage the timid, revive the desponding, strengthen the weak, persuade the unwilling, by such arguments as spring from the amazing love of Christ to sinners, and his being "able to do for us exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us," then to speak "the truth as it is in Jesus," requires a kind of intimacy therewith which nothing but close, habitual, affectionate intercourse of heart can give. These are notes which only the higher strings of our harp, and those fresh tuned and high strung to the praise of God, can reach. These are the secrets of the Lord, of which words can only reveal the types and shadows ; and of which we can only speak as the Lord would have us speak, in proportion as, like the angels, we are constantly "*desiring to look*" into them, and for this purpose are much "with God in the mount," and so become "filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding." Hence it is that we have not a larger proportion of such preaching : that the tenderness of God's compassion and love to draw the hearts of sinners is not oftener used, instead of the awfulness of his wrath : that christian duties are not oftener set out in the company of the christian's privileges : that divine commandments are not more enforced by divine promises : the barrenness of the wilderness of our pilgrimage displayed as connected with the fulness of that Rock that follows us, and which makes streams in the desert : the duty of implicit obedience and daily self denial, associated with the equal duty of rejoicing in hope of the glory of God, the shepherd often ascending with his flock to some mount of blessing, and contemplating with them "the rest that remaineth for the people of God." A heart in spiritual dulness and languor has no skill for the handling of such themes, and is afraid of them. There may remain all our wonted powers of reasoning, force of description, liveliness of imagination, readiness in exposition ; but all lacking the only wing that can float in that higher element of spiritual truth. Many a popular and awakening preacher never attains that height. But what a large part of the whole counsel of God must needs be kept back, or delivered most defectively ; how much of the glory of God, which it is his people's privilege, "with open face," to behold in the gospel, must be held in reserve : how much of the bread provided of

God for the daily feeding of his people, must be kept under the hand of the Priest within the veil, if there be not an unction, an aptness of heart, for the treatment of these themes, arising out of a near intimacy of experience with them.

What is most required for such views, and their appropriate exhibition and cordial enforcement, is a deep experience of the power of divine things upon our own affections, hopes, and spiritual enjoyment; a deep sense of the preciousness of the several parts of gospel truth, as they all centre in Christ. Eminently is it true of such views that *"they are spiritually discerned."* According to St. Paul, we must be *"rooted and grounded in love,"* that we "may be able to comprehend what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height, and to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge." The deep places of contrition and of humility are most needful aids in such contemplations. We see the stars in the day time, by going down into a pit. How full of instruction concerning the preparation of spirit for the bearing of the message of the gospel, is that chapter wherein Isaiah speaks of his seeing the Lord, with the seraphim standing before him. The Lord had a message to be delivered to his people Israel. But, before the prophet could be prepared to be the bearer thereof, he must be cast down in self abasement as a sinner, unworthy of any such honor. The way to this was a view of God in his infinite majesty and holiness. He "saw the Lord, high and lifted up," his train filling the temple, and before him the winged and veiled seraphim, crying one to another, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of Hosts." The prophet could not bear the view. Self abasement at once appeared. *"Wo is me, (he cried,) for I am a man of unclean lips."* His next preparation for the message was hope and peace with God, through the sacrifice of atonement. One of the seraphim came down and took a live coal from the altar of sacrifice, and touched his lips, and his sin was purged. Then was he ready to say, *"Here am I, send me."* Oh! my brethren, the more we see of the holiness of God, and the more we are led by the view to humble ourselves before him, as miserable sinners, and continually to find consolation in the sacrifice of Christ alone, through the coming down of the Holy Spirit, taking of the things of Christ, and showing and applying them to our hearts, the more we shall be prepared for the work of the Lord, and be ready with alacrity of spirit to say, in view of any duty, *"Here am I, send me."*

But this part of our subject is too wide, and I am enlarging too far. Were there time, it would be profitable to consider how an earnest state of pious affections will contribute to furnish endless variety to our discourses, filling the mouth with arguments, which otherwise would not be thought of; causing us to see passages of scripture in various aspects and applications, in a beauty and richness of interest which otherwise would not appear; making old views to return with fresh interest, by being seen through a growing engagedness of heart,

and from ever changing and higher positions in the way of our pilgrimage.

Then, again, *opportunities of usefulness*, how do they multiply, how ingenious we become in discovering and making them, when once we are all alive to their value and improvement! Trials and discouragements, such as we have constantly to meet in carrying our messages to a world lying in wickedness; all those frosts and mists under which we are so tempted to complain and despond, to seek little and expect less, how is their evil changed to good, by the alchemy of a truly spiritual mind; how will a heart animated and buoyant with faith and love, mount over all waves of opposition or affliction, as a life boat in a storm! What lightness and alacrity will it have in all duty! "*I will run the way of thy commandments (saith David) when thou hast enlarged my heart.*" Yes, verily, the secret of all diligence, energy, pleasure, success in duty, is a heart enlarged by the love of God. Then are the crooked ways made straight, and the rough ways plain, "*the lame man leaps as the hart,*" "*the tongue of the dumb sings.*" "*For the love of Christ constraineth us.*" Oh! that golden chain of perfect freedom; that binding yoke of most sweet and willing bondage! See St. Paul, the bondsman of Christ, going out to his daily service of labors and perils, chanting his morning song, and saying, "Most gladly will I glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Yea, I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake, for when I am weak, then am I strong." "Strong in the Lord and in the power of his might," was St. Paul. But his strength was the strength of faith. And his strong faith worked by constraining, overcoming love, and thus he was "fruitful in every good work and ever increasing in the knowledge of God, strengthened with all might according to God's glorious power, unto all patience and long-suffering with joyfulness." What a poor thing, in the ministry of the gospel, is the man of great learning and eloquence and force of argument, whose preaching wants the vital warmth and spiritual earnestness of a single zeal for Christ and love for the souls of men. Weigh him in the balance of the sanctuary! Estimate him in view of the judgment day! Think of him as he will appear when he and all are receiving the fruits of embracing or rejecting the gospel! Compare him, before God, with the man of far inferior gifts, who to the Master's work unites the Master's spirit, and does, with all his heart, as though God did beseech men by him, pray them to be reconciled to God. With how many tongues does the latter preach. If any forget his words, none can forget his evident sincerity and solemn earnestness. The sermon from the lips may not be retained. The sermon preached by the whole spirit of the man, as of one realizing the weight of his message, and the worth of souls, cannot pass away.

Think, moreover, of the power of the daily example of one who

thus lives under the impression of the word he preaches, feeding upon the bread, relying upon the hopes, maintaining the daily walk with God which he entreats others to adopt. His sermons are only occasional. His example is always. His sermons are only in the church. His example is wherever he goes. His sermons all may not fully understand. His example is a universal language. The child, the man, the gainsayer and the believer, alike understand it and must read it, and take impressions from it, concerning the soul, and eternity, and Christ, and holiness.

Think, moreover, of the unseen influence, added to the public ministry of such a man of God, from his nearness to the throne of grace, and his greater faith and constancy in prayers for those that hear him. He has them, as St. Paul had the Philippians, *in his heart*; so that *they all are partakers of his grace, and he longs after them all in the bowels of Jesus Christ*. Thus the weapons of his warfare become "mighty through God," and many are added to the Lord.

CONCLUSION.

But I must conclude, not however without a few words upon the precious assurance of the text—"In so doing thou shalt both save thyself and them that hear thee." Thou shalt save thyself! What a motive to diligence, faithfulness, earnestness, constancy till death! Think, dear brethren, of the blessedness of that day, when the Lord and Head of the church shall say to each of us, if found faithful, "Well done, good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." Let us animate our hearts with thoughts of such bliss; especially when the burden is great and the trials of patience are many, and the temptation is strong to yield to the current of worldliness around us, and do our Master's work coldly, negligently, living unto ourselves, seeking our own ease, then let us think of our own souls, and look forward to what God hath prepared in his kingdom for faithful servants, till our hearts burn within us for "the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."

But, "*them that hear thee*" shalt thou also save. Thou shalt be the instrument, under God, of saving them from eternal anguish, and making them partakers of everlasting joy. Oh! the flood of joy that will come over the soul of the faithful minister of Christ, when after having found his own election sure, he shall see the many blessed, glorified saints, in the same inheritance, whom his ministry, through grace, did bring there, and when next to the honor they render unto him who washed them in his blood, they shall come about him to call him blessed, and acknowledge the sweet fruits of his labors to their souls. Ah! we know not what we shall be. Little can we conceive of such bliss. We know something now of the joy of beholding a sinner turned unto God through our ministry. But our love to the souls of men, our estimate of their value, our benevolence, is so feeble. How little we know what is done, when a soul is saved. But then,

when we shall have gone to Christ, "we shall be like him;" like him in the tenderness of his compassion and the fulness of his love; like him in the joy with which he will behold the multitudes without number of his redeemed and glorified church. Then shall we know the blessedness of having been instrumental in saving them that heard us. We shall meet them ever and ever, for eternity, in their glory, and every new sight of them will be to us fresh fulness of joy. Such the motive of faithfulness in our work! Such the argument for taking heed to ourselves and our doctrine! The Lord help us! The Lord bless his word at our lips! The Lord look down from heaven upon his servant, now to be made a shepherd of his shepherds, and his flocks, under him the chief "Shepherd and Bishop of souls," and grant him grace for all his work, so that in spite of all the opposition of the devil, the flesh and the world, he may both save his own soul and the souls of them that hear him, through the in-working Spirit, and the interceding righteousness of our Lord Jesus Christ!

To whom, with the Father and the Holy Ghost, be all honor and glory, world without end. *Amen.*

SERMON CCCXVIII.

BY REV. JAMES G. HAMNER,

OF BALTIMORE.

THE SUDDENNESS OF CHRIST'S COMING.

"And as it was in the days of Noe, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of Man."—LUKE xxii. 26.

God's great object in speaking to us in the bible, is to rouse every soul to fly from the place of peril, and to lure guilty and unhappy wanderers, by the narrow way, into the rest remaining in heaven.

To compass these gracious ends, he has spoken in the whisperings of love, and in the thunderings of wrath, in the persuasions of boundless goodness, and in the threatenings of infinite authority; in the yearnings of deep compassion, and in the sternness of holy indignation.

To enforce these addresses, he has invoked the histories of the past and of the future. The banishment of sinning angels from light, and their incarceration under chains of darkness; the withdrawal of the Holy Spirit from antediluvian rebels, and their devotement to de-

struction by the deluge of waters ; the absolute degeneracy and total consumption of the inhabitants of the vale of Siddim by fire from the Lord out of heaven ; the leaving of Jerusalem desolate, and gathering all the elements of wrath and implements of war to sweep it as with the besom of destruction ; and the great day of doom in which the Lord Almighty shall make inquisition for blood, and burn up all the works of men, and purify this polluted globe as with fire—are all made to glow together in the fearful picture of God's strange works, that all men may take warning and fly from the wrath to come.

And then in the contrast, the glory and felicity of the elect angels ; the salvation of Noe from so terrible an overthrow ; the security of Lot from devouring fire ; the safety of all the saints that fled, on the momentary retreat of the Roman legion, to Pella ; and the everlasting redemption from sin and wrath and hell of all that follow Christ our Lord in the regeneration, are thrown, to burn together in another glorious picture, to draw the guilty, trembling, desponding, and anxious sons of men into the path of purity and peace—into the "many mansions" of God in heaven.

The text holds forth, as in the light of cloudless day, two terrific and overwhelming catastrophes to rouse the world from their guilty stupor, to quicken their escape from the emptyings of the vials of wrath, that they may find safety and rest at the foot of the cross of Jesus.

One of these catastrophes is past—the other is yet to come. The earth has already been wrapt in the coverings of waters, as in swaddling bands ; it is yet to be enveloped in sheets of living flame, and burnt to a cinder. "The world that then was being overflowed with water, perished : but the heavens and the earth which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men. The day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night ; in which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat ; the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up."—2 Pet. iii. 6, 7, 10.

If God should speak now from heaven into every man's ear and to every man's soul, the assurance that all the present generation shall witness this great day ere death comes upon them—what trembling anxiety—what terrific alarm—what wakeful vigilance—what steadfast resolution—and what untiring efforts to be ready to meet the Lord at his second coming, would possess and exhaust the globe's inhabitants ! Every novel sign in the heavens above and the earth beneath—every flash of lightning—every peal of thunder—every rush of the stormy elements—every volcanic eruption—and every heaving or rocking of the earthquake, would startle the guilty dwellers on earth, and make them look up for the last appearing of the Son of God without sin—unto the salvation of all that believe.

But men strangely forget that the day of death is to each one *the day of judgment*. For, as death comes upon us and leaves us, fallen in the dust of the grave, so *judgment* will find us, when, by the power of God, all the dead shall be raised. The circum-

stances under which we are placed, and death stealing upon us like the thief at the dead hour of midnight, or like the lion crouching and creeping softly upon his prey, should hold us all waking, should hasten our flight into the bosom of redeeming love and mercy.

The text instructs us in *two* points of comparison. 1. The *condition* of the world before the flood, and before the last conflagration. 2. The resistless rush of many waters, lightnings, and volcanic elements, and the quenchless kindlings of fire in the earth's bowels and in the atmospheric air.

I. The *condition* of the world before the flood, and before the last conflagration.

Of the abounding wickedness and lawless desperation of men before the flood, there can be but one judgment: but of what shall be the state of the world just preceding the last conflagration, there have been, and are still different opinions.

Some have supposed that Christ shall reign a thousand years with the faithful on earth personally, between the first resurrection and the completion of beatitudes; that Jerusalem shall be rebuilt in its splendor, and Palestine shall be the land of Christ's personal reign; that the *first* resurrection shall be restricted to martyrs and confessors; but after the downfall of Antichrist, all the just shall be raised up; that all *then* alive on the earth shall be continued through the thousand years; and that through all this period, all the saints shall possess the delights of an earthly paradise, as the great Captain of salvation shall reign over them.

Several passages of scripture are supposed to warrant this theory; but chiefly that in *Rev. xx. 1—6*.

But the true idea of the millenium seems to be something like this: That the church is to come up to a very high state of efficiency and prosperity never known before; that this state shall continue, through the space of a thousand years; or, using a *definite* for an *indefinite* term of years, through a very considerable space of time. During this time, the work of salvation shall be pushed to wide extent and to great glory; life shall be greatly prolonged; the early regeneration of men shall bring them, in the freshness of youth, into the kingdom; successive generations shall be mostly saved: so that on the whole, many thousands shall be saved, where one shall be finally lost.

This shall be of course a state and period of great happiness and glory. The Jews shall be converted from their delusions, and brought to receive the Messiah, in Jesus Christ. And his spiritual dominion shall be confirmed over all nations and kindreds and tribes in a most wonderful and illustrious manner. Great knowledge in all departments of research, great concord and peace and love shall prevail and bless the earth. Robberies and murders, crimes and wars shall end. Governments shall rest on fair, just, and humane foundations; and shall be administered on the principles of equity, truth, and righteousness. The various employments of life, and all the ramified explorations of men into nature's arcana, shall be pushed successfully, and be sanctified. Above all else the bible will be more highly and correctly ap-

preciated; its perfect harmony in all its parts will be more distinctly perceived; its matchless superiority will be frankly owned; and its living, divine energy, will be felt by millions on millions of minds. "The earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea."

This state of the church and of the world will run through the seventh thousand years of time. It will grow up and spread over all the earth's ends by degrees. It will be nearly complete before the end of six thousand years.

The rapid and amazing revolutions of empires, the striking accomplishments of prophecies, the multiplying of energetic and devoted missionaries, and the opening up of a highway from the ends of the world in these latter days, seem to cast out strong indications that this glorious and felicitous state is now coming up over the earth. The signs of the times, which God is hanging out of the moral heavens, surely are many, and ominous of vast events.

But, after all the achievements of truth, after all the triumphs of grace, after all the demonstrations of the Holy Ghost, and after all the displays of the presence of the mighty God of Jacob in the minds of the earth and of the church, there will still be wicked men on earth. St. Peter says: "There shall come in the last days, scoffers, walking after their own lusts, and saying, where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation." 2 Pet. iii. 3, 4. This and other parallel scriptures look to the end of the world and the setting of the general judgment.

But to the contrast.

1. *In the days of Noe.*—The careful antiquary can have little doubt, that the antediluvian generations of men were profoundly versed in all kinds of learning; that they carried the various handicrafts to the highest degrees of excellence and perfection; and that they were an excessively luxurious and infidel portion of mankind. Their protracted lives and practised tact gave them opportunities to accumulate vast stores of knowledge, to push improvements in all arts and sciences to great extent; and their luxurious habits of living and God's forbearance towards them in this living, begot in them a sort of omnipotence of sensualism, and ministered abundant aliment to their infidelity; so that they disregarded the zealous and pointed preaching of faithful Noe, pampered their lusts, cried, 'Peace! peace!' when sudden destruction was impending over them, and scouted the threatened judgments of the Almighty. Noe preached righteousness, and coming destructions; but they would not believe. Noe wrought at his ark, and so joined example with precepts, to work alarm into their secure souls, and to move them to repent and avert the judgments of God, as Nineveh did. But they laughed him to scorn, and walked on in the ways of transgression and death. So it was when Lot preached the doctrines and laws of righteousness. His wanton, lascivious, and beastialized townsmen, fat upon the abundance of God's bounty, in that luxuriant vale, now flooded by the waters of

the Dead Sea, rejected them as foolish and whining cant, gave a loose to all the fires of their lusts, thrust aside all the rebuke of this stranger, and hurried madly on to their doom.

And so it was too when the Son of God came and promulged his expositions of the law, held forth to merited contempt the destructive glosses of the doctors, brought out into the cloudless light of eternity the exalted spirituality of the economy of redemption, and made it most clear that *salvation* or *perdition* turns upon faith in him, or unbelief in the record God gave of him, and forewarned his contemporaries of the dreadful calamities and judgments they were bringing swiftly upon their city and nation.

"Jesus said unto them, see ye not all these things? verily I say unto you, there shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down. Learn a parable of the fig tree: When his branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is nigh; so likewise ye, when ye shall see all these things, know that it is near, even at the doors. Verily I say unto you, this generation shall not pass till all these things be fulfilled. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my word shall not pass away. But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven; but my Father only." But did he, who came to his own, gain any credence? Did his own kindred and nation believe the prophetic affirmations of God made flesh and dwelling with them? No. But did their unbelief stay the fulfilling of these prophecies of God, as to what he was about to do to the wicked for all their flagrant wickedness? No! no! The great plans of God Almighty rolled swiftly on, and his tremendous purposes were fully executed upon the unbelieving.

Look back with holy trembling to the several periods, and to the several preachers of those periods, to which we have adverted. See—the flood came, the fire from God out of heaven came, and the Roman legions came clad in all the terrors of war. Then the world was drowned, and the dwellers in Siddim were consumed, and Jerusalem was overwhelmed with sorrows unequalled in the histories of warfare and in the sackings of cities.

So, in many respects, it will be when the end of this world shall come. While *then* the proportion of believers and of unbelievers shall be reversed from what it now is, the *believers* shall swell to the high numberings that now belong to the unbelieving, and the *unbelieving* shall dwindle down to the small amount of present believers, still the wicked will be very desperate in their deeds and strides in evil doings. The fear of God will be cast off under the clear revelations of divine truths, and the pungent application of them to their hearts. And sinning on, despite all God's dealings, declarations, and judgments, Pharaoh-like, they will grow into more adamantine insensibility and impious resistance against the arm of the Most High. As there were giants in the earth in ancient days; so there will be giants in wickedness and rebellion in the earth when the Son of Man shall appear the second time, in the clouds of heaven, taking vengeance on his foes. There will be scoffers, in that day, jeering at bible predictions and

threatenings, and walking after their own lusts. They will reckon it as absurd and impossible that the world should be burned up with fire, as the antediluvians did, that it should have been drowned by water. 2 Pet iii. 3—13.

2. *In the days of Noe.*—Then men pursued their various avocations and pleasures without any disquieting apprehensions of sudden death or coming judgment. Their minds were engrossed with schemes for augmenting riches, for concentrating applause, admiration, and honor from men, and for accelerating the tide of pleasurable indulgences and enjoyments. Their noble, cultivated, and largely furnished minds, were immersed in the turbid and poisonous waters of sensual and earthly things. They could find no time to spare to acquire true, unseen, and eternal riches, and pleasures, and honors, though their lives were spread out through hundreds of years; yet they could find no time to seek the things of God and of heaven. "Before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, and knew not until the flood came and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of Man be."

So then, at the last great day, when the Son of God shall come to judge the world, men will be, in like manner, swallowed up with the pageant objects and scenes of this vain world. The things seen and temporal will exclude from their minds and hearts the immense spiritual interests of their souls and of eternity. The riches of time will absorb their capacities of thought and of feeling. Honor's gaudy and dazzling exhibits will bewilder and confound. The spell of the enchantress, pleasure, will still hold men bound as in chains and fetters of iron. They will refuse to entertain the idea of danger at hand. They will claim to expect things to abide as they are and ever have been. They will live on in sin and forgetfulness of God, as men now do. They will not heed the steady approach of death; nor suffer themselves to think of his sudden and fatal arrest. Unbelieving of the vast interest at stake, uncaring to escape from hell, or fly to heaven, they will be overwhelmed as with the suddenness of a falling thunderbolt, when the heavens are without a cloud.

II. When then all things shall be moving uniformly on, as they have always moved, suddenly, as the lightning flashes, that great catastrophe will break upon the astounded sons of earth. O! how they will be overwhelmed! How they will shriek and call to the rocks and the mountains to hide them from the face of him who sits upon the throne!!

Noe's contemporaries laughed him to scorn, when he predicted the rising, rushing, overflowing of the waters, and kept himself, with all his resources, employed in completing the ark. That incredulous race of men cultivated their farms, sold their merchandise, enlarged their store houses, added farm to farm, and house to house; intrigued in canvassing political topics, contended in legislative halls, struggled for place and for power, and reveled in sensual pleasures and debauch, up to the very hour in which the lightnings began to play, the

thunders began to peal, the bars of the great deep began to burst, heaven's windows began to fly open, the floods began to rise and swell above the banks, and the high hills, and the lofty mountain tops.

So will it be when the last day shall break upon this oblivious and sin-burdened world. "Then shall two be in the field; the one shall be taken and the other left. Two women shall be grinding at the mill; the one shall be taken and the other left. Watch therefore; for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come. Be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not, the Son of Man cometh."

True, men know the histories of the past, how God dealt in stern justice with the antediluvians, how he dealt in stern justice with the filthy Sodomites, how he dealt with the infuriate inhabitants of Jerusalem, and how he is dealing daily and hourly with their guilty companions in pride and guilt and shame, and how he has foretold he will mete out due tribulations upon the impenitent and the unbelieving and disobedient at last; and after all, they will yield themselves up to the tyrannic control of the world's various and multiplied and clamorous cares, and hopes, and expectations, and plans, and pursuits, and gains, and toils, and vanities, and pride, and ease, and pleasures.

But this high display of folly—of downright madness, will not stay the dread outpourings of heaven's hot displeasure and devouring vengeance. The consuming flood of flames will come. The mighty billows of liquid fire will roll and thunder; but where, O! where will deluded and helpless and exposed millions fly for shelter, for a hiding place? While some shall be casting up the mighty sums of their treasures on earth, and some shall be expanding and improving their schemes for the increase of gain, and some shall be grappling antagonists in church and in state, in the contests for eminence of place and superiority of power, and some shall be wafted on the strong and steady breezes of prosperity, and some shall be thwarted and cast down and oppressed by the hard and heavy hand of adversity, and some shall be swilling at the founts of intoxicating drink, and some shall be manufacturing "distilled damnation," and some shall be re-tailing it and fattening their households upon unhallowed gains, and some shall be wallowing as swine in their styes, in the abominable pollutions of brothels, and some shall be gliding through the mazy dance to the notes of the viol, and through scenes of revelry, and theatrical shows, and deep forgetfulness of the eternal future; *then*, suddenly the earth will begin to heave and to rock; the fires irrepressible will begin to blaze out from one part under heaven to another, concentrated peals of rattling thunder shall break in one dread clash from pole to pole. The sun will turn to darkness, the moon will turn to blood, the stars will fall from heaven like shriveled fig leaves, and the heavens themselves shall pass away with a great noise.

How easily will God prostrate the loftiest towers and proudest monuments of human pride, vanity, and glory; and level all their palaces and habitations in promiscuous heaps of ruin, as recently he did in the tornado's pathway across a southern promontory. One

moment, all will be security and inapprehension, all domestic economy will be advancing, and guests will be sharing the hospitalities of friendship; the next moment, all will be wild confusion, and darkness, and terrors, and shrieks, and groans, and destructions, and death. Then the archangel's trump shall sound, then all the dead shall live, then all the progeny of Adam shall stand in waiting posture for the coming Judge. The heavens shall part, and on clouds the Judge shall come in all the glory of ten thousand suns, and attended by ten thousand times ten thousands of thousands of angels, strong in might, and swift in obedience, as executioners of his pleasure. Yes, one long and loud blast of the trump of God Almighty, will gather all Adam's race to the tribunal of the last great day. O! what a day of wonders, and of decisions, that will be!

But why do we look and gaze across the narrow chasm betwixt *this* day, and *that* day, seeing every hour transmits so many thousands of undying souls into eternity? O! how suddenly does death come every hour, every minute, every breath! How many well laid plans for gains, and honors, and pleasures, are utterly broken up, as quick as thought! How many prospects, once fair and full of promise, are instantly overcast with the blackness of darkness! How many thousands on thousands are left on this cheerless earth, all dreary, and friendless, and comfortless, and heart-broken, and death-stricken! All the dead—where, O! where are they? All the living—whither, O! whither do they pass in such retardless haste? Into vast, vast eternity they are plunged; up to judgment, to eternal judgment they fly!!

In view of these solemn and moving truths, I ask,

1. For what did the Son of God thus advert to these tremendous—these overwhelming events in the past, and to that awful, tragical event yet to come upon the world? Was it for the sake of a startling, thrilling appeal? and a sublime exhibit of his matchless grandeur and majesty? No, was it not rather to break up the *leaden slumbers* of the careless and the inebriates of pleasure? To stimulate the heedless and unthinking, to fasten their thoughts and meditations upon the immense scenes and objects before them? To rouse up the lethargic and indifferent to take hold on the hope in the bosom of the gospel, and to save the perishing wicked as by the hand of benevolent violence? What profound consideration then does the great subject before us demand of each one? We are involved in the ruins of sin, we lie under the ban of the Almighty's empire. "The soul that sins, it shall die." I ask again:

2. Has God not provided amply for the escape of "every creature" from the wrath to come? Is not the object of all such sublime and terrific language, to give men a due apprehension of their perilous condition, and to awaken them to fly from the terrors and destructions of the last great day? The object is *benevolent*, and ought to be so adjudged, and appreciated accordingly. Men ought not to turn away from the friend that faithfully and truly exposes their condition and prospects, that they may escape absolute ruin.

Men ought not to separate two things that God has joined indissolubly, and thereby peril their souls. God calls every man to *believe* and *obey* the gospel. They that do, shall live; but they that will not, shall perish miserably.

Noe escaped the watery flood by *faith* and by *obedience* to God. If he had said, "O yes, the word of God will be accomplished, the flood will come," but then sat still in idleness, all his faith would have availed him nothing: or, if he had toiled hard at some device of his own, regardless of God's counsel, all his labor would have been of no avail. But he *believed* God's word and *obeyed* his mandates, and was saved. Thus it was also with Lot, and with the disciples who escaped from Jerusalem and fled to Pella. Why now should any of us neglect the only way of salvation, and perish from the presence of the Lord? Why should any neglect so great salvation? What will it profit us to possess ten thousand worlds for a day—and then lie down in hell torment for ever?

I ask yet this once:

3. *When will you pause? When will you ponder your ways? When will you return unto the Lord of grace and glory, with all your hearts?* Is there not a needs-be, that you fly to the arms of the Son of God, who has been delivered up to shame and to death, that, "Whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life? God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. He that believeth on him is not condemned; but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God."

Is not *this* your time? Have you another moment you can call your own? *Now* is the accepted time; *this* is the day of salvation. The present moment is freighted with all the vast interests of your souls and of eternity. If you let it fly away unappropriated for good, may you not irreparably lose your all? Can you recall a past moment? Can you regain the imperishable interests it has carried away with it? Will you, can you, dare you sin on in view of all that is at stake, and of that great and terrible day of the Lord, which will break so suddenly, so unexpectedly upon the world?

O! ye that turn pale as death, and shake with affright, when earthquakes rock the globe, when volcanoes burst its bars assunder, when lightnings blaze; and thunders crash, and howling tempests sweep all before them,—will ye not prepare in this your day of gracious visitation, to meet your God and Judge, when he shall rise and shake terribly the earth, wake up all the slumbering nations and generations of the dead, call all the dwellers of earth, with all apostate angels, to stand at his awful bar and pass review beneath his all-seeing eye, and shall render to every man according to the works done in the body? Beheld, *now* is the day of salvation! Behold, *this* is the accepted time! *to-day!* if you will hear his voice, harden not your hearts. "As it was in the days of Noe, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of Man."